

Give a Girl a Chance – South Sudan



Lona, Ayak, Idia, Fahista – GAGAC scholarship recipients

One of the most impactful moments during our May Learning Tour to South Sudan was our meeting with these young women. They had traveled to NCP-built Queensland Girls' School in Nimule from their homes several hundred miles away, fleeing violence and gender bias.

"In our village, people were being killed like houseflies," young Idia told us. *"To try to keep us safe, our parents hid us under the bed when the militias came near."*

"In my area, it was considered an abomination to educate a girl," Lona said. Now she is the top student in this entire state of South Sudan.

Give a Girl a Chance – and she will make full use of it to improve herself and her nation.

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Backyard Fence—conversations about the new community

Email received this summer from NCP friend Josh Brycki:

"It has been a long time. I took a job as a Biology teacher here in Pennsylvania. I work at a school where students come from a rough background and where it is their second chance to succeed. It is my responsibility to teach them science. Given the nature of the school, a youth forestry camp teaching kids that are (mostly) never going to be in a classroom again and are (statistically) most likely to end up back in prison, I have a long leash on what I get to teach (there are no parents worried about teaching evolution or getting into elite universities).

It got me thinking, "what the heck should I teach them?" and "What is actually going to help them?"

Whilst undertaking some research, I came across two quotes from an article I read that prompted me to reach out:

- *"While modern education reformers act as though the survival of humanity depends only on science, math, engineering, and technology, I have learned that our survival depends first on sympathy, mercy, and love."*
- *"I believe [Wendell] Berry wants every place on earth loved and cared for and every person on earth able and pleased to love and care for a place and all the creatures in it, human and not human. He believes this is not only the best path to individual satisfaction, but also the only path to peace. I believe this is a powerful and important message for educators. In a world exhausted by overreach and threatened by overshoot, Berry's thinking is necessary, but radically countercultural."*

Most of my kids grew up in Philly with no chance to appreciate their intimate relationship with nature. Thank you for giving me a better understanding of that relationship as I grew up, and for being an inspiration as I think about how to educate my unique group of kids.

Sincerely, Josh

New Community Project Advisory Board: Robbie Miller (chair), Taona Makunje, Steve Brady, Jerry O'Donnell, Greg Davidson Laszakovits, Kim McDowell, Linetta Alley, Hope Steele, Timothy McElwee, Alex Murphy

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As the World Turns...



"...turning the world upside down..."

Newsletter of the
New Community Project

*Ideas that challenge us.
Experiences that
change us.
A community that gives
us hope.*

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20 Years – By the Numbers

NCP turns 20 this year! Over these two decades, we've covered a lot of ground and want to use this edition of the newsletter to offer some highlights of our work. Of course, numbers don't tell the whole story, as our impact isn't always visible and countable. But figures do perhaps provide some indication of progress toward our oft-stated goal of "changing the world." So let's see how they add up!

Learning Tour Totals

With South Sudan, Ecuador, Lybrook, Yellowstone and Denali since May, this brings the total number of Learning Tours offered by NCP since 2003 to 78. With an average participation of 10+, that means nearly 800 people have climbed mountains, shared with and learned from communities, encountered wildlife, visited reforestation sites, eaten local foods, forded local streams, and ridden buses and boats and land cruisers for miles. And survived, thrived and returned home with new friends, new ideas and new majors. And offered encouragement – and often a good laugh – to our neighbors. 2024 LT lineup on pg 3.

Special Edition: 20th Anniversary!

In-person In-spiration

Along with Learning Tours, "experiential learning" for NCP includes engaging people at our Sustainable Living Centers and during our visits to groups.

Since 2008, NCP Harrisonburg has been working on behalf of those who often don't have a voice, while drawing on indigenous wisdom, as well as spirituality and the science of ecology. Tom Benevento and crew have initiated a range of programs including Renew Rocktown, the Northend Greenway, the Sustainable Business Coalition, Soil Cycles, Silver Run Forest Farm, Give Solar, school gardens, the Jubilee Climate Farm, and Vine & Fig houses of hospitality.

The site has hosted over 21,300 volunteers, 86 10-month interns, and 63 capstone students from nearby colleges who have implemented projects from soil and water testing to a solar tiny house to designing bicycle and pedestrian paths and more. Each year, they house around 25 formerly homeless folks or recent immigrants from refugee camps in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

With us since only 2015, NCP Vermont has already hosted over 600 volunteers and fifteen summer interns who have contributed 20,000 hours of service. Their food justice gardens and Food Share program have grown, gathered, and distributed over 20 tons of food along with 4300 prepared meals to those in need. They have built two greenhouses and two Little Free pantries. Pete Antos-Ketcham has been instrumental in expanding a Community Garden, founding an Energy Committee, and building a community pavilion in nearby Starkboro. He has also coordinated firewood and fuel delivery to dozens of families each winter.

Director David Radcliff has made over 1900 presentations in these past 20 years in schools and colleges around the country. He has also spoken some 350 times in congregations, camps and virtual gatherings, including a recent Zoom event with students from China, and led over 70 Learning Tours.

20 years of Giving a Girl a Chance

Educating girls and empowering women has been one of the most important things we've done over these 20 years. Our Give a Girl a Chance fund has worked through our partners in Africa and Asia to give scholarships to over 7700 girls and hygienic materials to these and thousands more since 2003; supplied 200 bicycles to girls in Malawi; and provided school supplies, mosquito nets and even food when needed.

For women, we have supported 795 with microloans to start small businesses; trained over 10,500 to be tailors, beauticians, stove makers or midwives; and provided land for displaced Batwa women in Rwanda.

Altogether, NCP has raised over \$1.8 million in support of girls and women over these two decades.

Special Campaigns since 2003

Larger one-time efforts: If We Build It... (girls' school in South Sudan); But Not Forgotten (post-earthquake relief for Nepal); Labor Day Campaign (midwives in Congo); Keep 'em Safe (wall around survivors' shelter in Nepal); Covid relief (Africa, Asia, S. America); and more. Total: \$219,250.

If a Tree Falls... (we replant it!)

Money may not grow on trees, but it can sure grow trees! That's what the \$478,800 contributed to our If a Tree Falls... program has done since 2003. Thanks to our partners' frugality (Jimmy Zan getting avocado seeds from restaurants in Burma; Paskwale Ben using mosquito net packages as planting containers in South Sudan), trees can be planted for 10-50 cents each.

Based on our partners' calculations, we've planted some 3,700,000 trees in the past two decades in Africa, Asia and the Amazon. As a tree stores around 50 pounds of CO² per year, that's 91,000+ tons of greenhouse gases sequestered annually – plus habitat, medicines, fruit, shade!

In the Ecuadorian Amazon, we have preserved 200 acres of forest and provided critical support to native partners defending the rainforest.

As the World Turns is published by the New Community Project, a nonprofit organization. Contact NCP at: 117 Nature Road, Blue Ridge, VA 24064; 540-855-1199; dradcliffncp@yahoo.com; Website: www.newcommunityproject.info

Return and Rebuild – South Sudan NCP fall campaign

Our visits to South Sudan are always eye-opening, and May's Learning Tour was no exception. The world's newest nation (2011) has been caught up in conflict much of the past decade, sending hundreds of thousands into internal or external exile.

Recently tensions have lessened, allowing people to return home and begin to rebuild their lives. However, they are often starting from scratch – especially the women and girls with whom NCP works. The women are often single mothers with few resources; the girls have been through a lot.

Unsung heroes
The 35 teachers at Queensland Girls' School in Nimule earn \$50 per month – enough to purchase one large sack of flour, a staple food. NCP is hoping to increase this by \$25 to boost their household income and their spirits.



Our partner, the South Sudan Organization for Women, has issued a plea for additional assistance beyond our usual

support for scholarships, skills training, microloans, reforestation, etc.

- **Women's Empowerment: 30 sewing machines: cost split \$75/\$75** with returned refugee women graduating from our tailoring program; one **designing machine** (\$1600) and a **labeling machine** (\$800); new **latrine** for the training center (\$3000)
- **\$75 start-up grants for 55** women graduating from the beautician training program
- **Goats** for 60 households: \$70 per pair
- **Queensland Girls' School: 25 scholarships** for refugee and orphan girls at \$200 each; an **on-site clinic** (\$5000); **\$25 per teacher** to boost their monthly wage; another **school bus** to help day scholars get to school (\$15,000; we raised funds for their first bus in 2020 – they call it “our biggest blessing!”)
- **Reforestation: 20,000 trees** (\$5000). “We lost many trees during the conflict.” Fruit trees will address food insecurity, teak provides income, trees of all kinds combat the threat of climate change in the region.

Help our friends in South Sudan rebuild their lives!
Personal, congregational or other support welcomed. Find more info on the NCP website.

Updates: Myanmar, Alaska and New Mexico

Myanmar (aka Burma)

[The military in Myanmar carried out a coup on February 1, 2021, claiming unfair elections. They put the leader of the opposition, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, under house arrest. There has been armed and peaceful resistance (over 200,000 Burmese are part of a Civil Disobedience Movement), but at this point the military remains in firm control, not tolerating dissent and often inflicting violence on civilians. This has led to 1.6 million people being displaced.]

From our co-worker Moe: “Thank you for worrying about Myanmar. The situation in our country is getting worse. There is no law enforcement. The inflation of the currency has also increased, so the commodity price is very high. It is a problem for all of us. By the grace of God I am able to survive today. Our organization is helping internally displaced people who are suffering in this bad situation. That job is a lot of risk for me. I will give you the detailed report later.

“Although I would really like for NCP to visit again, under the current situation it is not possible for anyone to come here. In this situation, only God can do it. We will see each other after things calm down. Please pray for us.”

Alaska (aka growing, melting and burning)

Our August Learning Tour found continuing escalation of climate change impacts. Higher underbrush impeded several of our hikes, as the tree line advances northward and upward. One of the most discouraging developments has been the arrival of bark beetles in Denali National Park. We have seen the climate-fueled progression of these tree-ravaging insects over the past two decades, knowing the park was in their path. The dead trees they leave in their wake are also kindling for Alaska's wildfires – millions of acres burn annually.

And then there is Exit Glacier. Here are photos of its retreat between 2016 and this past summer.



Lybrook, NM (Dineh, aka Navajo)

Marlene Thomas and son Erik Dennison are working hard to maintain the site and provide services to the nearby Dineh community. In June we met with medicine woman Dorothy Keetso and activist Kendra Pinto, and got the impacts-of-fracking tour with elder Samuel Sage.

Truth...or Dare!

What we don't know *can* hurt us – especially in the long run. NCP doesn't shy away from facing the truth about our world, challenging all of us to dare to act for something better. Thus, this Truth...or Dare! segment: Tough questions about changing the world.

The Problem: We all want to live more responsibly toward our planet and its people. Yet, making the needed changes can be challenging, given the lack of good options, and may have side effects for ourselves and others. Here are some questions raised by people in Zoom gatherings recently, along with our responses:

Q: If we cut back on our consumption and change our habits to be more green in the name of fighting climate change, what about job losses and our quality of life? R: 1) Let's remember that what hangs in the balance is the future of life on earth as we have known it. 2) The ILO predicts a loss of 6 million jobs globally by 2030 during the transition to clean energy, but a gain of 24 million jobs in that same period due to greening of the economy. 3) Until 1970, humanity lived within its ecological means – today we exceed biocapacity by 60 percent (materials consumption along with absorption of our greenhouse gases). Could we once again endure a 1970 lifestyle? Two caveats –

a) there are twice as many people now, so supporting things like girls' education is essential for reducing population and b) for the Poor World, life in 1970 was even more basic than it is today – so the Rich World would need to reduce its consumption to allow for them to have a livable life and all of us to have a livable planet (however, much of that could happen via increased efficiencies and green energy advances – with the support of our community – see below).

Q: Even with the best of intentions, should we be traveling to other parts of the world, given the cost in terms of both money and carbon emissions?

R: 1) I'm sorry that Covid kept me from seeing you in person today, but I admit some relief in not making the 3-hour drive for exactly these reasons. 2) However, if a personal encounter with our world leads to new perspectives and actions, then it can be worth it. People who come to our Centers and go with us on trips often find these to be life-rearranging in one way or another.

Q: (asked by a student from China) I want to live more minimally but find it very challenging. What could help me stay on this course?

R: Community. We have to find others who share our concerns and struggles and will join with us, since the “other side” – our consumer culture – is a powerful and seductive force forever whispering in our ear that we *are* what we drink, drive, dress and drool over. As Asta Taylor writes in her book *The Age of Insecurity*: “*All the while, manufactured insecurity encourages us to amass money and objects as surrogates for the kinds of security that cannot actually be commodified – connection, meaning, purpose, contentment, safety, self-esteem, dignity and respect – but which can only truly be found in community with others.*”

Experiential Learning

Go. Meet. Learn. Grow. Be renewed. Change—yourself and your world.

Experience of a lifetime

Experiential learning is NCP's way of helping us see ourselves and our world in a different way via Sustainable Living Centers, speakers & Learning Tours.

2024 Learning Tours

Nepal (January 9-21, 2024) Travel to this beautiful but impoverished Himalayan country, hosted by NCP partner Shakti Samuha. Visit shelters for survivors from the sex trade as well as girls and women receiving NCP support. Take an overnight trek to be wowed by the Annapurna Range and explore Chitwan National Park – rhinos, elephants, sloth bears, crocodiles – and maybe a tiger! *(We'll spend time with these amazing Chepang girls this January.)*



Ecuadorian Amazon: Deep Jungle (June 1-7) Explore places deep in the rainforest guided by native shamans; see all manner of amazing plant and animal life (monkeys, sloths, pink dolphins!); learn about threats to the forest, including palm oil and petroleum; visit NCP preservation projects.

Lybrook, NM (June 22-28) Work alongside Diné (Navajo) on community projects, visit a medicine woman, talk with and learn from local artisans. Explore the culture and current challenges facing the Diné, including hydraulic fracking and climate change; visit Chaco Culture National Historical Park, one of the best-preserved examples of pre-Columbian native life.

Denali/Kenai Fjords National Parks, Alaska (July 27-August 4) Camp and hike in the Denali National Park, see bears, moose, caribou, a sled-dog demonstration (and maybe make a friend!) – and hopefully Denali, the highest mountain in North America. Spend the final two days in Seward exploring Kenai Fjords National Park via a full-day boat trip to view whales, otters and puffins. End with a stop at Exit Glacier.



Arctic Village, Alaska (August 4-12) Visit this north-of-the-Arctic Circle community: Gwich'in by birth, caribou by culture. Hike and camp in sight of the Brooks Range. Learn about the threat to their way of life posed by oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and by climate change. Enjoy traditional foods and tales of native life and lore around the campfire.